

HAND IN HAND PLAY

By 24 to 36 months, your growing baby...

- stacks six blocks into a tower by 24 months old and multiple towers or structures by 36 months
- can hold a crayon using her thumb, index, and middle fingers
- copies horizontal lines and a cross (by 36 months)
- copies a circle and draws first purposeful drawing (by 36 months)
- can cut along a line on paper (by 36 months)
- can place paste on paper
- begins to dress herself
- eats with a fork



Fine Motor Development

card 57

Strategies to Share

- Vary the size and type of blocks for play. Huge stackable plastic or wooden blocks may interest your child at this stage. Create your own “blocks” by saving old cardboard orange juice cartons, removing the tops and pushing one inside of the other.
- Continue to expose your child to crayons and paper. Begin tracing lines and shapes as your child gets closer to 36 months. To help maturation of your child’s grip on a writing utensil, encourage writing with a crayon broken in half. Smaller pieces are more difficult to palm and will force her to practice with more mature grasp patterns.
- Increased strength of smaller hand muscles is important for your child’s handwriting later on. Use pop beads, bubble wrap, sponges (for wringing out), and “Play-doh” or modeling clay (for kneading) to strengthen little hands at this age.
- To increase the strength of the grip required to hold a pencil well, let your child use salad tongs to pick up objects and place in a container. Use wind-up toys and a jack-in-the-box. Have her use an eye dropper to squirt colored water onto a target, even trying to imitate a color pattern that you model.
- Model drawing a circle; help guide this motion until your child tries independently.
- Provide paper with straight lines and encourage cutting along the lines with safety scissors. Be creative with what you give her to cut: magazines, strings, or the tips off of green beans to help Mommy or Daddy prepare dinner.
- Use your creativity and various art supplies (paint, stickers, glue, stamps) to make masterpieces with your child. As she gets closer to 36 months, she may incorporate her art skills into more purposeful creations, such as homemade books and collages.
- Supervised play with buttons (if she is careful to keep them out of her mouth) can be fun for sorting, matching, and creating pictures while exercising finger muscles.
- Learning to get dressed independently takes lots of practice. Try to be patient and expect that she’ll need repetition. Increase chances of success early on by allowing her to practice dressing and undressing for play—not when you are in a rush to go somewhere! Choose clothes with elastic waists and larger neck and arm openings. Provide a large pile of dress up clothes and help your child perform a “fashion show” for family members. Don’t forget accessories, like socks, gloves, and hats—all great dressing practice for tiny hands.
- Provide a fork at mealtime and model “stabbing” soft foods that are easy to pierce, such as cheese, vegetables, and fruits. Hand the fork with food on it to your child to feed herself and then encourage her to do the same.